

Pella in the running for state-wide honors

By **MIKE SULLIVAN**
The Chronicle

In January, 2005 Governor Vilsack put forth a new initiative called Iowa Great Places which involved at least 145 Iowa communities making a one page invitation by July 1 to the Great Places Citizens Advisory Board.

The communities that were selected from their invitations would be appointed a coaching team that would work with them as they develop their community's offer. These offers would be presented to the Citizen Advisory Board in September - in whatever form the community and coach decided is best for the community. The Citizen Advisory Board would then select three pilot Great Places in October.

The Citizen Advisory Board will consider offers in context of seven dimensions: "A Unique Sense of Place, Engaging Experiences, A Rich Social Fabric, A Vital Economy, A Pleasing Economy, A Strong Foundation and a Creative Culture." The Citizen Advisory Board will assess each place's level of readiness to be a Great Place.

The Iowa Great Places Advisory Board includes: Robin Anderson, Mason City Director of the Mason City Chamber of Commerce; David Bernstein, Sioux City, President of State Steel; Claire Celsi, Des Moines, Public Relations Executive for Strategic America; Samantha Erickson, Pleasant Hill Co-Founder and Vice-President of Community Housing; Mark Ginsburg, Iowa City, Owner of M. C. Ginsburg Jewelers; Tom Hanafan,

Mayor of Council Bluffs; Quentin Hart, Waterloo, Retention Coordinator for Hawkeye Community College; Terry Lynch, Marion Director Of Marketing for Fox Engineering of Ames; Bill Menner, Grinnell, Executive Director of Poweshiek Iowa

Development; Gil Spence, Dubuque, Director of Parks for the City of Dubuque; Amanda Styron, Mount Pleasant, Student at the University of Iowa; Rita Vargas, Davenport, Scott County Recorder.

Pella has embraced this project and taken it from the invitation to being one of the forty plus communities remaining. Some excerpts from the opening paragraphs tell it all, "Our Offer to You-Have we got a thrilling, knock-you-out-of-you-seat offer for you! Consider Pella today. If you've been here, you know we are a quaint community, full of Dutch heritage, tulips and wonderful pastries. Perhaps you've savored some of our fabulous poffertjes, or shopped downtown in our boutiques, bakeries, and meat markets. We hope you've been to our Tulip Festival, seen the beautiful flowers, caught one of the festival's parades or performances, toured our authentic Dutch windmill, and walked along our Molengracht canal. Yes, you think, Pella was always a sweet place to visit for an afternoon, an interesting place to visit with your parents. But whoa! Now you can see what this area is happening. This is where it's at. This is an Iowa Great Place. We're offering you the opportunity to be our partner on this exciting adventure. This adventure will never end, but we would love to have

you with us for at least part of the way. It promises to be amazing!"

The Blue Ribbon committee whom has been working with their coaches, LaDene Bowen, University of Northern Iowa and Teresea Taylor, of Iowa Workforce Development is made up of Betsy Roe-Central College, Myron Linn-Pella 'Corp,

Gary Timmer-Central College, Mark DeJong-DeJong Greenhouse, Carla Ferguson-Marion County Development Commission, Tilly Woodward-Central College, Karen Eischen-Pella Convention and Visitors Bureau presented their Great Pleat Places Offer to members of the Great Places Advisory Board Amanda Styron and Rita Vargas and Terri Lynch of Marion.

A booklet and video presenting Pella Iowa's Great Place are available at the Pella Public Library.

The Place profile notes Strengths, Recent Developments and Challenges such as Pella's Dutch Heritage, Pella's Historical Village, Scholte House, Dutch Front Program, Sculptures and Hindelopen paintings, The Molengracht, the VerMeer Mill, the Paul J. Farver Memorial Bridge. It notes that Pella received honors as the Iowa Tourism Community of the Year in 2003. Around the globe Pella is noted for it's Tulip Time Festival.

Committee member Myron Linn noted that, "There is enough horsepower and enough vision in this community to get us to the next level."

The Vision continues with the Cordova Center on the Rock. This Project will be at Cordova Park on the shore of Lake Red

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Rock, Iowa's Largest Lake, and will include the development of a major center that will provide environmental learning experiences while enhancing the quality of life for both visitors and residents."The expansion of the Volksweg bike trail, a youth camp, frisbee golf and horse rental will be just some of the interesting improvements along this Cordova

Corridor," commented Ferguson..

Creative Culture is an ingredient of the presentation,"We propose creating a Culture District In Pella." "We envision a space dedicated to philanthropic organizations in the core of Pella's downtown, allowing critical community organizations to have a more visible presence in Pella and thus improve their outreach

opportunities."

Asked if the committee had been informed as to when they would know if Pella would be one of the three communities selected, Betsy Farver stated,"We weren't told a date specifically, but there is something is planned for October 11, so we hope that is it."

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